

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 AMMAN 00887 01 OF 02 141516Z

ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 570

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 0887

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, JO IS US

SUBJ: MAQARIN DAM CONSULTATIONS

REF: A) TEL AVIV 0942; B) AMMAN 0810; C) STATE 031600

1. SUMMARY: ON FEBRUARY 12, TAUBENBLATT AND PIERSON MET WITH OMAR ABDULLAH, PRESIDENT, JORDAN VALLEY COMMISSION, AND CONVEYED FIVE AREAS OF CONCERN RELATED TO MAQARIN DAM CONSTRUCTION EXPRESSED BY ISRAELIS PER REF A. ABDULLAH NOT SUPRISED BY GOI QUESTIONS SINCE HE AGREED THAT FIVE AREAS HAD TO BE DEALT WITH IN COURSE OF MAQARIN DAM PROJECT; AND THERE WILL BE NEED FOR SOME FORM OF COORDINATION BETWEEN JORDAN AND ISRAEL AS MAQARIN DAM/YARMOUK RIVER DEVELOPED. ASKED IF THERE WERE SPECIFIC TECHNICAL DATA THAT ISRAELIS COULD PROVIDE WHICH COULD BE HELPFUL IN MARQARIN DAM FEASIBILITY STUDY HE SAID THAT HE WOULD CONSULT WITH HARZA WEEK OF FEB 21 DURING FORTHCOMING VISIT TO CHICAGO. HE WILL ALSO VISIT WASHINGTON. AMBASSADOR ALSO SAW CROWN
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 AMMAN 00887 01 OF 02 141516Z

PRINCE AND GAVE HIM THE FIVE QUESTIONS. HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED BY OMAR ABDULLAH AND HEAD OF NATIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL AND HAS DECIDED TO FORM A WORKING GROUP OF THE TWO TO DEVELOP ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS. WILL PROVIDE FURTHER COMMENT ON JORDANIAN POSITION AND SUGGESTIONS ON THE NEXT STEPS WHEN ANSWERS ARE READY. END SUMMARY.

2. ON FEBRUARY 12, DURING VISIT TO MAQARIN DAM AND YARMOUK RIVER SITES, TAUBENBLATT AND PIERSON MET WITH OMAR ABDULLAH DOKHGAN, PRESIDENT, JORDAN VALLEY COMMISSION. BACKGROUND TO MEETINGS ON FEB. 2 AND 6 WITH ISRAELIS WAS DISCUSSED AND FIVE AREAS OF CONCERN DESCRIBED REF A WERE CONVEYED TO OMAR ABDULLAH. TAUBENBLATT EMPHASIZED INFORMAL GOOD OFFICES ROLE, AND THAT HE NOT HAERE TO NEGOTIATE ON BEHALF OF EITHER PARTY, BUT RATHER TO ACT AS CONDUIT TO PERMIT FLOW OF INFORMATION BETWEEN JORDAN AND ISRAEL ON PROBLEM OF UNILATERAL CONCERN RELATING TO MAQARIN DAM/ YARMOUK RIVER PROJECT.

3. OMAR ABDULLAH INDICATED THAT HE NOT SUPRISED WITH FIVE AREAS RAISED BY ISRAELIS, SINCE THESE HAD TO BE DEALT WITH IN THE COURSE OF THE MAQARIN DAM PROJECT. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT THERE WILL BE A NED FOR SOME FORM OF COOPERATION TO REALIZE THE MAQARIN DAM/YARMOUK RIVER PROJECT. THIS COOPERATION WOULD BE MUCH EASIER HE SAID IF PROGRESS IS MADE THIS YEAR IN RESOLVING BROADER ME ISSUES. WHILE VERY FRIENDLY AND POSITIVE IN HIS REACTIONS,HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO DISCUSS HIS POSITION ON THE ISSUES IN DEPTH. HE OBVIOUSLY FELT THE NEED FOR POLITICAL GUIDANCE. THE FOLLOWING ARE ABDULLAH'S COMMENTS ON THE AREAS OF CONCERN EXPRESSED BY THE ISRAELIS:

A. ADASIYE TRIANGLE. WHILE NOT MENTIONING SPECIFIC FIGURES WE INDICATED THE ISRAELI CONCERN THAT ADEQUATE ACCOUNT BE TAKEN BY THE MAQARIN PROJECT OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 AMMAN 00887 01 OF 02 141516Z

WATER RIGHTS OF THE ADASIYE TRIANGLE. ABDULLAH REAFFIRMED THAT JORDAN RECOGNIZED THE LEGITIMACY OF THESE RIGHTS, BUT INDICATED THE SPECIFIC AMOUNT OF THE CLAIM WAS NOT FIRMLY ESTABLISHED. APPARENTLY REFERRING TO ISRAELI REPORTS, HE MENTIONED 40 MCMS AS THE TOTAL ANNUAL REQUIREMENT WHICH SHOULD BE SATISFIED IN PART BY YARMOUK WATERS, BUT ALSO BY LAKE TIBERIAS AND THE JORDAN RIVER, THE WATER BOUNDARIES OF THE AREA. WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK HE THOUGHT AN AGREEMENT ON THE ACTUAL AMOUNT WOULD NOT PROVE DIFFICULT. B. FLOW AND QUALITY OF WATERS. ABDULLAH SAID VERY LITTLE ABOUT THIS MATTER, AGREEING THAT THE FLOW REQUIRED DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS BEYOND EAST GHOR CANAL INTAKE HAD TO BE ESTABLISHED. HE DID NOT SEEM FAMILIAR WITH OR UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 2.3 MCMS FIGURE MENTIONED BY THE ISRAELIS BUT FORESAW LITTLE PROBLEM IN RESOLVING THIS QUESTION. IN HIS OPINION A DIVERSION DAM AT THE CANAL INTAKE CONTROLLING THE FLOW OF WATER INTO THE CANAL AND DOWNSTREAM TO

THE "TRIANGLE" WOULD BE THE BEST METHOD OF ARRANGING THE WATER FLOW TO BOTH SIDES AND HE HOPED SUCH A SOLUTION COULD BE WORKED OUT.

C. ECOLOGY AND ENVIROMENT. ABDULLAH SEMMINGLY HAD NOT GIVEN MUCH THOUGHT TO THESE ISSUES, BUT DID NOT BELIEVE THEY WOULD PROVE VERY COMPLICATED. HE AGREED THE DEAD SEA WATER LEVEL WAS A LEGITIMATE INTEREST TO THE PTASH INDUSTRY ON BOTH SIDES AND READILY SUPPORTED THE SUGGESTION, AS HE DID IN NOVEMBER 1976, THAT THE U.S. FINANCE SOMEONE TO EXAMINE THIS AND RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS. HE FELT THERE SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT WATER IN THE LOWER JORDAN, ALBEIT OF HIGHER SALINE CONTENT, TO PRESERVE THE CHARACTER OF THE CHRISTIAN HOLY PLACE AT CHRIST'S BAPTISMAL SITE. (COMMENT: BASED UPON THE DISCUSSIONS HERE AND IN ISRAEL IT IS CLEAR THE U.S. CAN PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN CLARIFYING THESE QUESTIONS, AND THAT WE SHOULD MOVE QUICKLY TO BEGIN A MORE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 AMMAN 00887 01 OF 02 141516Z

THOROUGH INQUIRY THAN WILL BE PROVIDED BY THE HARZA STUDY. A SEPARATE MESSAGE ON POSSIBLE SCOPE OF WORK AND FUNDING WILL FOLLOW THIS SUBJEC. END COMMENT).

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 00887 02 OF 02 141531Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 AMMAN 0887

LIMDIS

D. ISRAELI HYDROELECTRIC RIGHTS. ON THIS SUBJECT, OMAR ABDULLAH PAUSED, SMILED, AND SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE ANYONE WOULD SERIOUSLY SUGGEST USING FRESH WATER IN THE VALLEY FOR POWER GENERATION. AGRICULTURE OUTPUT CLEARLY IS OF HIGHER PRIORITY WITH ALTERNATIVE MEANS AVAILABLE FOR PROVIDING ELECTRICITY. INTERESTINGLY HE SPOKE RATHER POSITIVELY ABOUT THE ISRAELI INTEREST IN GENERATING POWER FROM MEDITERRANEAN SEA WATER. HE THOUGHT SOME SUCH SCHEME MIGHT BE FEASIBLE AND DESIRABLE. ALTHOUGH HE OBVIOUSLY NOT FULLY INFORMED, HE SAID THE PALESTINIAN POWER RIGHTS ISSUE MIGHT HAVE SOME SIGNIFICANCE IN THIS CONTEXT.

E. WEST BANK WATER RIGHTS. JORDAN'S POSITION HE FELT ON THIS ISSUE HAS ALWAYS BEEN CLEAR. THE JORDANIANS HAVE NEVER QUESTIONED THE WATER RIGHTS OF THE AREA AND THE FINAL REPORT WILL PROPERLY TAKE THE CLAIM INTO ACCOUNT. WHILE NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTIONING THE WEST BANK, THE "ULTIMATE" DEVELOPMENT PLAN DESCRIBED IN THE HARZA REPORT PROVIDES FOR THIS CLAIM. WHEN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 AMMAN 00887 02 OF 02 141531Z

ASKED ABOUT THE AMOUNTS POTENTIALLY AVAILABLE FOR THE WEST BANK HE SAID HE DID NOT YET KNOW WHAT THE REPORT WOULD SHOW. HE INDICATED HOWEVER THAT THE WEST BANK ALSO HAD HISTORICAL CLAIMS TO UNDERGROUND WATER AND WATER FROM LAKE TIBERIAS, AND THAT THE YARMOUK ITSELF CANNOT PROVIDE SUFFICIENT WATER TO IRRIGATE ALL THE POTENTIAL CULTIVATABLE LAND ON THE WEST BANK.

4. AS LONG AS THE REPORT AND JORDAN'S PLANS TAKE THE WEST BANK WATER REQUIREMENT INTO CONSIDERATION, ABDULLAH FEELS JORDAN SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROCEED WITH ITS PLANS TO DESIGN AND CONSTRUCT MAQARIN, LEAVING TO A LATER DATE IF NECESSARY, THE RESOLUTION OF WEST BANK STATUS, AND THE QUESTION OF THE ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT REQUIRED TO STORE AND DISTRIBUTE WATER TO THE AREA.

5. IN THIS INITIAL MEETING WE DID NOT PRESS FOR FULL CLARIFICATION OF THE JORDANIAN POSITION ON THESE ISSUES. WITHOUT AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE TECHNICALITIES AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS WITH HIS SUPERIORS, ABDULLAH CLEARLY WAS NOT PREPARED TO DEFINE HIS POSITION MORE PRECISELY. HE SAID THAT ISRAELI CONCERNS DID NOT SEEM UNREASONABLE, AND EXPRESSED HIS OPTIMISM SEVERAL TIMES THAT THEY COULD BE SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED IF BOTH SIDES WISHED TO DO SO.

6. AT CROWNPRINCE'S REQUEST, AMB REVIEWED

WITH HIM ON THE AFTERNOON OF FEB 13, THE ISRAELI
QUESTIONS. EARLIER CROWN PRINCE HAD SEEN OMAR
ABDULLAH AND NPC CHIEF, DR HANNAH ODEH. ABDULLAH
HAD BRIEFED HASSAN ON HIS EARLIER DISCUSSIONS WITH
TAUBENBLATT AND PIERSON. AMB LEFT A COPY OF
THE ISRAELI QUESTIONS WITH CROWN PRINCE. AMB
ALSO DISCUSSED EACH QUESTION BRIEFLY WITH CROWN PRINCE
AND IN ADDITION MENTIONED THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD NOTED
THAT THE ADASIYE TRIANGLE NOW USES ABOUT 40
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 AMMAN 00887 02 OF 02 141531Z

MCM OF WATER ANNUALLY, THAT THE HARZA REPORT NOW ALLO-
CATED 17 MCM FOR THIS AREA AND THE JOHNSTON PLAN HAD
MENTIONED 25 MCM.

7. CROWN PRINCE NOTED THAT HE WOULD BE FORMING A TASK
GROUP, INCLUDING OMAR ABDULLAH AND HANNAH ODEH TO RE-
VIEW THE ISRAELI QUESTIONS AND DEVELOP RESPONSES. IN
ADDITION THE TASK GROUP WOULD PROBABLY ALSO REVIEW THE
JORDAN RIFT VALLEY PROPOSAL WHICH THE JORDANIANS HAVE
HEARD ABOUT IN THE ISRAELI PRESS IN ORDER TO GET A
BETTER IDEA OF WHAT THE ISRAELIS SEEM TO HAVE IN MIND
IN USING MEDITERRANEAN SEA WATER FOR ELECTRICAL POWER
PRODUCTION UTILIZING A CANAL INTO THE JORDAN VALLY-DEAD SEA
AREA.
PICKERING

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